

Embracing Inclusivity: Introducing the Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark (DFQM)

Advancing educational equity for dyslexic learners through systemic change and inclusive practices

Introduction

The Dyslexia-Friendly Quality Mark (DFQM) is a significant Ako Aotearoa (the National Centre for Tertiary Teaching Excellence) Manako programme initiative. The Manako programme, formerly known as the Adult Literacy, Numeracy and Cultural Capability (ALNACC) programme, continues our partnership with the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) to enhance educational capability across Aotearoa New Zealand. Embracing our roots and expertise in literacy, numeracy, and both Māori and Pacific cultural capability, Manako expands our commitment to delivering inclusive and effective education, informed by the values and needs of all New Zealanders.

This briefing paper presents the DFQM, an innovative programme designed to foster inclusive education for dyslexic learners in Aotearoa New Zealand. Building on a foundational understanding of dyslexia and its impact in educational settings, the purpose is to build organisational capability and raise awareness, including at the ministerial level, underscoring the need for systemic change. This document elaborates on the necessity of integrating the DFQM across educational organisations to ensure equal opportunities and a supportive learning environment for all learners, particularly those with dyslexia. The paper highlights the potential of the DFQM to transform teaching practices, enhance the learning experience of dyslexic learners, and align with Aotearoa New Zealand's broader educational objectives of inclusivity and teaching excellence.

Advancing inclusive education: The role and impact of the DFQM in Aotearoa New Zealand

Below, we outline the intricacies of dyslexia in Aotearoa New Zealand and the transformative role of the DFQM in shaping inclusive educational practices and aligning with the nation's educational goals, while also considering the implementation challenges and the profound benefits it offers to learners, educators and organisations.

1. Understanding dyslexia in Aotearoa New Zealand

Dyslexia, a common learning difference, affects approximately 1 in 10 learners. It presents challenges in reading, spelling, writing, and processing information, not indicative of intelligence or potential, but rather a distinct neurological processing



style. Recognising and accommodating dyslexia is crucial for equitable educational opportunities, especially in a country that values diversity and inclusion in its educational philosophy.

2. DFQM objectives and significance

The DFQM from Ako Aotearoa serves as a structured programme for organisations to become more dyslexia-friendly. By engaging with the DFQM, organisations demonstrate their commitment to understanding and supporting the unique needs of dyslexic learners. This initiative is aligned with Aotearoa New Zealand's commitment to inclusive education, aiming to elevate the standard of support and understanding across educational environments.

3. The DFQM's alignment with educational goals

- » Raising awareness and understanding: The DFQM emphasises the importance of educating staff and learners about dyslexia, thus aligning with the national goal of creating informed and empathetic educational communities.
- » Promoting inclusive teaching practices: By advocating for teaching methods that cater to dyslexic learners, the DFQM supports the broader objective of inclusive and personalised education, ensuring that all learners have access to quality education.
- » Supporting diverse learning styles: The initiative celebrates different learning styles, encouraging educational organisations to embrace and cater to the varied needs of learners, thereby fostering an environment of diversity and inclusion.

4. Challenges and implementation strategies

- » Assessment and training: The DFQM requires an initial assessment of current practices and subsequent training for educators, demanding a shift in traditional teaching methodologies to more inclusive practices.
- » Implementation and monitoring: Organisations must adopt dyslexia-friendly practices and continuously monitor their effectiveness, ensuring that the changes are not just superficial, but deeply integrated into the educational fabric.
- » Resource allocation: Successfully implementing the DFQM may require significant resources, including time, financial investment, and professional development opportunities, posing a challenge for some organisations.

5. Benefits of DFQM to learners, educators and tertiary education organisations

- » For learners: The DFQM ensures a supportive and empathetic learning environment, allowing dyslexic learners to access education effectively and confidently.
- » For educators: The DFQM builds educator awareness of dyslexia and introduces them to strategies for teaching and supporting dyslexic learners.
- » For organisations: Embracing the DFQM not only enhances the reputation of organisations as inclusive and progressive, but also aligns them with national and international standards of quality education.



Conclusion and recommendations

The DFQM represents a critical step towards inclusivity and excellence in Aotearoa New Zealand's educational landscape. By acknowledging and accommodating the needs of dyslexic learners, educational organisations can play a pivotal role in shaping an empathetic, informed, and inclusive society. This initiative aligns with Aotearoa New Zealand's broader educational goals, promoting a more comprehensive understanding of diversity in learning. To fully realise its potential, it is essential to consider increasing resourcing or funding for the programme, ensuring that organisations across Aotearoa New Zealand can actively engage with the DFQM, integrating it into their processes to ensure that all learners, regardless of their learning differences, have equal opportunities to thrive.

